

Realities in the Arts of the Medieval Mediterranean, 800–1500

Dumbarton Oaks Symposium 2002

Art history has come a long way in the thirty years since Otto Demus' *Byzantine Art and the West*. We think now in terms of communications rather than influences, regions rather than centers and peripheries, demand rather than supply, consumption and reception rather than the role of magisterial models. These innovations are more than matters of wording: they reflect shifts in the conceptual foundations of our discipline, prompted as much by critical theory as by the discovery of new evidence.

But in the wake (and light) of the theoretical “revolution,” it is perhaps time to reconsider fundamental questions about the means by which motifs, techniques, and ideas traveled from one region to another. What, for example, is the relation between mosaic workshops attested in the Holy Land and those of Constantinople? Can we make sense of the tangled relations between Arab and Byzantine silk and ceramic production? How, and from where, did Western historiated initials arrive to grace Greek books? When and how did Byzantine methods of ivory carving reach Egypt? By what means were Ayyubid metal-working practices disseminated? Can we assess the impact of Venetian industrial arts upon the central and eastern Mediterranean? What were the mechanisms that allowed the apparent confluence of Latin and Greek themes in “Crusader” wall painting and manuscripts? Is it useful to distinguish between economic and noneconomic exchange, or separate this from more broadly based clienteles?

Some answers can be derived, as recent research has shown, from scrutiny of the objects themselves. But given the limited survival of many, these need to be viewed against the background of the written sources. While documents such as the Geniza archives have been exploited, others—notably the terms of trade treaties, Italian commercial documents, and Arab gift lists—would seem to throw light upon the filiations between objects of allegedly very different origin that art historians recognize on stylistic and technical grounds. All in all, we are calling for the integration of the artifactual and historical evidence, the former providing clues to what may be significant in the documents, the latter furnishing a context for and quite possibly a pattern to the distribution of goods in the Mediterranean between the ninth and fifteenth centuries.

Program

Anthony Cutler, Pennsylvania State University

Introduction

Christopher Wickham, University of Birmingham

The Mediterranean around 800: On the Brink of the Second Trade Cycle

Leslie Brubaker, University of Birmingham

Rome, Constantinople, and Spain: Exchange of Luxury Goods

David Jacoby, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Silk, Economics, and Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the West

Marianne Barrucand, Université de Paris, IV—Sorbonne

Early Byzantine *Spolia* in Fatimid Egypt and Contemporary North Africa

Anthony Cutler, Pennsylvania State University

Gifts as Markers of Cultural and Commercial Exchange between Byzantium and Islam

Deborah Howard, St. John's College, Cambridge

Venice and Damascus in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

Véronique François, Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, Laboratoire d'archéologie médiévale méditerranéenne, Aix-en-Provence

Réalités des échanges en Méditerranée orientale du XIIe au XIXe s.: L'apport de la céramique

Peter Schreiner, Universität zu Köln

Diplomatic Gifts between Byzantium and the West, 800–1200: An Analysis of the Written Sources

Holger Klein, Columbia University

Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West

Jaroslav Folda, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington

The Figural Arts in Crusader Syria and Palestine, 1187–1291

Maria Georgopoulou, Yale University

The Arts, Industry, and Trade in the Thirteenth-Century Mediterranean

Maria Vassilaki, University of Thessaly

The Evidence of Icons

Yuri Piatnitsky, State Hermitage Museum

Byzantine Icons and Greek Artists in Old Russia

Jannic Durand, Musée du Louvre

Innovations gothiques dans l'orfèvrerie byzantine sous les Paléologues

Robert Nelson, University of Chicago

Constantinople, Trebizond, Rome, and Florence: The Exchange of Books

Angeliki Laiou, Harvard University and Academy of Athens

Realities of Economics and Exchange in the Mediterranean World